TRANSCRIPT—Emma Lou Gaddy Morrow and Doris (Dot) Gaddy Gosnell

Interviewees: Emma Lou Gaddy Morrow and Doris (Dot) Gaddy Gosnell

Interviewers: Tealey Ellis and Judith Robertson

Interview Date: November 29, 2018

Location: Laurels at Summit Ridge

Length: 1 digital recording; 00:38:45 (original 00:39:12)

Transcriber: Tam Milton

Transcription Date: September 29, 2022

TE: My name is Tealey Ellis, and I am a volunteer with the Fairview Library Oral History Project in Fairview, North Carolina. Today, November 29, 2018, I am interviewing Emma Lou Gaddy Morrow and Doris (Dot) Gosnell at the Laurels of Summit Ridge in Asheville, North Carolina. The information from this interview will be placed in the North Carolina Room at the Pack Library in downtown Asheville, North Carolina. Thank you, ladies, for sharing this information with us today.

JR: This is Judith Robertson recording the oral history of Emma Morrow and Dot Gosnell at the Laurels of Summit Ridge in Asheville, North Carolina, at 11:00 on November 29, 2018, for the Fairview Oral History Project for the North Carolina Room at the Pack Library and Buncombe County Library System. The conditions of use form for sound and video recordings has been signed by the interviewees.

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JR: This is Judith Robertson resuming the interview.

TE: One of the first things I'd like to ask you ladies to get us started is to share your parents' names and where they were born because you ladies were Gaddy's before you were married, and that's the name that we are associating all of this with and so we want that history part of it, so if one of you could share your parents' names and where they were born.

EM: Mother and Daddy were not born in West Asheville. They were born in Yancey County. My mother was. Daddy was born out in Barnardsville, and that's where they both grew up. Mother was born on Cane River section and then I don't know much about the history as far as years go. I just know that they lived there for a good long time and Daddy went to work when he was a carpenter so he went to Norfolk to find work, I think about 1940 or '41. Barnardsville is Buncombe County. So anyway, what point did I miss.

TE: Could you give me your mama and daddy's names?

EM: Mother's name was Rosa Hensley, and Daddy's name was William Harley Gaddy. He was from Barnardsville. Mother was from Yancey County on Cane River.

TE: When did y'all move to Fairview?

EM: Well, they were already there. Mother and Daddy moved there when I was a baby. I was born in West Asheville on Old County Home Road over here. Believe it or not. Then, of course, we moved around and Dot was born in Henderson County, right, Dot?

DG: Madison.

EM: Madison. Who was born?

DG: Then we moved, our parents moved, from Madison to Buncombe. I knew it was different places in Buncombe, but we landed up on Brush Creek Road in Fairview.

TE: About what year might that have been, Dot?

DG: Was that 1942?

EM: I told her, I believe it was about 1942.

DG: Second World War.

DM: So many men had to go to service. It was about 1941, 1942.

TE: What was it like for you as children in Fairview, part of that school, but what were some of your experiences about being a child in Fairview?

EM: We worked in the field.

TE: What did you do in the field?

EM: We hoed corn.

DG: And tobacco. Daddy was a carpenter and also a farmer. And he raised nine children.

EM: We got out. Me and Dot would get firewood and bring it in. We were Daddy's boys, so we worked outside. Now, Dot milked, but I liked to work in the house, so I cooked and helped Mother in the kitchen. So, I did the cooking and Dot did the…

DG: But we were the middle. I was number five child out of nine children. I was either too little or too big to do anything.

EM: Or she didn't know enough.

DG: And Emma Lou was two years older than me.

JR: What number were you in the order:

EM: I was number four.

DG: She was number four. During that time, we only had an older brother, and we didn't…Daddy needed a couple of boys right along Emma Lou's age …so we were his boys. We worked in the field, and we hoed.

TE: So, you helped the family.

DG: I guess we did.

TE: Part of that hoeing brings food, doesn't it?

EM: Daddy raised tobacco lots, y'all remember them. And Dot said I wonder if he thinks we're going to pull these worms off these tobacco leaves. Those worms scared Dot to death.

DG: I am still scared of worms. I stood in them fields and didn't touch the worms and stood there and cried. Until my daddy would come and rescue me at the end. Mother would cook our lunch in the middle of the day and then we'd go home, because Daddy would rent some land. We'd say he rented the rockiest old land he could find.

EM: The roughest. And put us out there, two little children.

DG: We were just little old things.

TE: About how old do you think you were?

EM: Thirteen.

DG: Not that old.

EM: I guess I was thirteen and you probably ten, twelve.

DG: Emma Lou, I think we were younger than that. I declare, I believe we got out the cradle and went to the field.

TE: Well, Miss Emma, you mentioned that you cooked in the house with your Mom some. What was your favorite thing to cook when you were younger?

DG: She was just learning.

EM: I made pies and cakes and fried chicken and made biscuits.

DG: Now that's after you got grown.

EM: I had to act grown because I was all that Mother had, because Mother had a bad heart and she was just, high blood pressure, she just couldn't do for herself and the family anymore. Dot was Daddy's boy, and she helped Daddy.

DG: I did not like to do any cooking. I just liked to--

EM: See. She liked what she did, and I liked what I did.

DG: And I liked to work at the barn and get in the wood and milk the cows.

TE: Well, that worked out.

DG: One day, Emma and I. She hated to milk cows. We had two cows. One day, she and I made an agreement. I'll milk both the cows, Emma Lou, if you wash the dishes. She

said that suits me fine. I don't remember how long I milked the cows. Until I graduated from high school, I reckon.

EM: We had fun.

DG: It was enjoyable. It don't sound like we had much fun, but we did. We laughed all the time.

EM: We did. We laughed at each other. We laughed at everything.

TE: Tell us about school, when you started school here in Fairview.

EM: Well, I was…I know I…

DG: Well, the first school bus we lived on the school line was when we moved to Brush Creek in '42. We had the bus come the other side of the road.

EM: The first grade, we lived on Spring Mountain. We had to walk about a mile to catch the school bus. But then we leave Spring Mountain area, Dot, when Daddy bought.

DG: Yeah, that was, yeah. That's when we moved to where we live now. Listen to me, where we live now.

EM: Where the home place is.

TE: And the home place is where?

DG: 1031 Upper Brush Creek Road. Exactly where I lived. I came back to a…when I got married, in 19 and 53, I couldn't wait to get away from there because I was so afraid I was going to have to marry a farmer. Anyway, I did not. I got married and then I moved

to Charlotte and lived in Charlotte all my married life. And Emma Lou was still here. And then I raised all my children in Charlotte and when I lost my husband in 2002, I moved back here. So, you can go home again. There was no plans to come back to Brush Creek and we had, well, Emma Lou was back, and we had a sister that came back from Augusta. We had a brother that came back from Atlanta and another brother that came back from Atlanta. So, we all came back to the land.

EM: It just kept drawing us back. All the siblings.

DG: No plans.

EM: It just happened.

TE: It just happened. But you obviously had a happy life.

EM: We did. We still get along good.

TE: How does it feel to actually come back home again?

DG: I was thrilled to death to get to come back up here. My daughter, that still lives in Charlotte, said, Momma, you're just running away. I said no, it just feels like home.

EM: Part of your heart's there.

TE: And comfort.

DG: I just love it.

TE: Good, good. So, you've seen a lot of change in Fairview.

EM: Goodness, yes.

DG: We live downtown now.

DG: Our property is two miles from 74. Now, when we wanted to go to town. Now remember, when we were growing up, the road was gravel, we had no phone lines. When we wanted to go to town, we dressed up, we put on our high heels, and we walked right up that dirt road, right over to Guy Merrell's store and caught the bus to town on a Saturday.

TE: What did you do when you got to town?

DG: We shopped.

EM: Well, we hit Patton Avenue.

DG: From that bus station. We'd shop all day. I didn't have any money. This is after she went to work. She had a little money. And we'd have lunch.

TE: Was that the cafeteria?

EM: Yeah. I worked there.

DG: The S&W, after you got out of school.

EM: That was my first job.

DG: We'd stay in town all day. Then walk back to the bus station, catch a bus back to Fairview, walk our two miles back home.

EM: That was just life.

DG: That was life. But there wasn't a fat one of us, and you can see why. Lord, no wonder we were all skin rails. We just ate like a pig. We had a good time. We didn't know any different.

EM: That was life.

DG: Everyone up in that area was the same way.

TE: I was going to ask you about neighbors.

DG: Merrells

EM: They walked to church, just like we did.

DG: They had 14 kids. They lived farther on up Brush Creek. Well, everybody, almost everybody, had pretty big families. But we had good time. Talking about going to school. Scratch all that stuff. You don't have to print all that. I'm just giving you some background. But whenever we went to school. I think I was in the third grade whenever we moved to the land we live on right now and Emma Lou was in the fifth grade. Wasn't that about right, Emma Lou? I could be a couple of years off.

EM: You're close.

DG: But anyway…whenever we went to high school. Let's fast forward to when Emma Lou went into high school, B. K. Miller was the principal.

TE: Now that was here in Fairview.

DG: Yeah, that was the old Fairview. Reached 12th grade in Fairview, with the log buildings. We may as well date ourselves.

EM: There's Pop Carter.

DG: Pop Carter wasn't there then. B. K. Miller was when you was there, because you started playing basketball when you was in the 9th grade. B. K. Miller didn't know any of the people, Emma Lou did. He told, he asked Emma, he called her into the office one day and he said, Emma Lou, you gotta help me pick a ball team. 'Cause he was the coach, he was the principal but he was also the coach. He was a real nice person.

EM: I'd forgot about that.

DG: So, Emma Lou named off some names of some good ball players. Can you name the players? It's in her annual.

EM: Goodness, no. I can remember Jean Sheets.

DG: But first you had Hazel Merrell. And you had Betty Merrell, now it's Cunningham.

TE: Oh, yes, we've interviewed Betty Cunningham. Her daughter.

DG: She was a good basketball player, too. She was a notch over Emma Lou, a couple of grades. She still gets her hair fixed where I go.

EM: Does she? I didn't know that.

DG: Ooh, I can't think of the names; you'll need to get the annual.

TE: What year would that have been? We have some annuals we've scanned, so we might have it.

DG: 1949? 1950?

TE: ‘49 or ‘50?

DG: You’ve probably got that. That’s when Emma Lou graduated, in 1949. That’s when you graduated? 1950? 1949?

EM: Now I think I graduated in 1947.

DG: I graduated in 1951, so that would have made you in ‘49. Cause you were two years older than me.

TE: What was your best basketball game memory?

EM: Winning Buncombe County Championship.

DG: She was so good. She was the best one on the team.

TE: What position did you play?

EM: Captain and forward.

DG: She was a guard. That’s when the girls only played half-court.

EM: They played like girls, like women. Now they play like men.

DG: Half-court. Back and forth. And Emma Lou was a set shot. She could run and dribble and shoot. She was always a high scorer, usually.

TE: Captain of the team.

DG: She was normally…

EM: I was into everything.

JR: I'd love to see pictures of that. Have you got an old annual from that, that would show that?

DG: It would be in Emma Lou's. I never was really a good ball player. I played for two years but I never was good at it. My last two years I was cheerleader.

TE: Everybody needs to be cheered on. I believe it. You were getting ready to say something?

EM: I forgot.

TE: What was the church community like when you were growing up in Fairview?

DG: We went to Bethany Methodist on Bethany Church Road. We had a good little…

EM: I drove. And Dot did, too. We drove over in there, going to church.

DG: We walked until we could drive.

EM: And we walked, too.

DG: We walked everywhere.

EM: We walked if we needed to. If our Daddy wasn't using his truck, I'd drive the truck. Didn't have any license, of course. I'd drive the truck.

DG: The funny thing about…we always had our share of boyfriends. And we was pretty popular. Cause we always liked everybody. We just…everybody just liked everybody. We didn't have any enemies, if we did, we never did know about it.

TE: Where did you go on a date?

DG: We'd go to the movies.

EM: Right down here on Patton Avenue.

DG: We went to the Imperial.

EM: The Imperial was on Patton Avenue. The Plaza was up there where the library is.

DG: The guys would have to come, to drive the car all the way to our house to ask us for a date. Cause remember we didn't have phones. The phone lines didn't run if you lived off of 74.

TE: So, they were very interested to make that drive all the way in?

DG: Can you imagine kids doing that in this day and time?

JR: Just texting.

DG: I might have missed a whole bunch of dates back then.

TE: Did either of you meet your husband-to-be on one of those dates?

DG: No. I met mine on a blind date. 'Cause I was off of guys. I didn't want to meet nobody. I got tired of guys getting serious with me. And I told my sister-in-law, and she said I got this friend home from the airport and said he is the sweetest person. And I said I don't want to meet him. It seems like they always want to get serious and I don't. I'm tired of having a boyfriend. So anyway, I agreed to go out with him, and Lord he proposed four days later.

TE: Oh, my word!

DG: He went back to base and came back after six months and we got married.

TE: He must have swept you off your feet.

DG: He must have. He did.

JR: How about you, Emma?

EM: Oh, Lordy. Let's see.

JR: How did you meet your husband?

EM: Sawmill. It was in the woods below the house.

DG: Our next door neighbors were getting ready to build their house.

EM: Yeah, because Brush Creek wasn't built up at all when we moved over there. They, Kirsteins had a sawmill. They bought all that timber down in there, so they just brought the whole shebang of sawmill stuff and went down there and cut out all that, well it's a field now, on Brush Creek Road. And so, anyway, that's what came from the…

DG: The Morrows. So many of the Morrow guys worked for the sawmill.

EM: Troy worked down at the sawmill, and I'd carry him sweet apples. We had the best old-timey sweet apples. And I'd take the biggest, prettiest ones down there, and I'd give them to him.

DG: 'Cause they were all good-looking, all of those Morrows.

EM: And he was so good-looking, and so bashful. He wouldn't dare look at anybody. He was so bashful. But, rightly so, he was the best-looking man in Asheville or Buncombe

County. So, then I went my way and I just paid him no attention. Okay, that was what interested him. He felt like I didn't think he was good enough. (laughter) Oh, boy, it was a learning situation, I'll tell you.

TE: You played your cards right.

EM: Yes, I did. And I didn't even know what I was doing.

JR: So did he ask you out?

EM: Oh, yes. Well, not right in the beginning. He asked me out for his friend, for his best friend. And he's the sweetest, Jim Dotson, good Christian guy. I said, Troy, why don't you ask for yourself? And he said, I'm asking. And I said, okay, you got it. I said Bingo, or something of the sort. And that was our first date.

TE: How long until you were married, after that first date?

EM: Let's see. He went to service. It was about three years, four.

DG: 'Cause he was working and he always had a fine car.

EM: Oh, he had a snazzy car. But he wasn't stuck-up. He was very timid, you know, bashful. And…

TE: Do you remember what kind of car he had?

EM: Oh, indeed. I've got pictures of it. It was a Buick Roadmaster. If you remember the Roadmaster. That's what Troy always drove.

TE: Oh, I do.

DG: He had an Oldsmobile. He always had those hatchbacks.

EM: Yeah, that's the Oldsmobile. His first car was an Oldsmobile.

TE: What color was the car?

EM: Black. Back then, they hadn't started painting cars bright colors like they do now.

DG: They didn't even have white cars, come to think of it. It was black or two-tones.

TE: I bet it was a very long car.

EM: It was. It looked like a hearse.

TE: With real chrome. Not the shiny stuff.

JR: So how long were you married?

EM: Let's see. How long did it take me to get him out of the house?

DG: Twenty-five years.

EM: It was longer than that.

TE: What is your…and each of you to answer this, if you would. Overall, what were your best experiences, or how would you describe your life in Fairview? You started us off talking about working in the kitchen and in the fields as young girls and growing up and high school and everything. What did it mean to you, living in Fairview?

EM: It was just a happy time. We laughed all the time.

DG: We were happy. We had a happy, happy life.

JR: You didn't worry about things.

EM: No.

DG: We didn't know we was supposed to, I guess.

EM: We didn't worry about anything.

DG: When we played, we played in the woods. We made playhouses. We made our own toys.

JR: It sounds like you were very self-sufficient. In every way.

DG: We were good kids. Most kids then were good kids. …if we wasn't we'd've got a whipping.

EM: We had a grapevine swing up on the ridge.

DG: Pretty sure it's still hanging. I live right down below that old grapevine swing right now.

EM: Big old roaring gullies. They're on both sides. That big grapevine hanging up there in the middle. And our brother cut it in two so we could make a swing. We would dare when we started slipping out.

DG: Yeah, we had to slip up there. We didn't have permission.

EM: Mother would have died if she knew what we were doing.

DG: We'd go up there. You'd swing out over the treetops.

EM: Yeah, and look down.

DG: Lord, it could've killed us.

TE: You were bold and brave women.

EM: Just stupid. Wouldn't you say?

JR: Well, nothing bad had happened yet. So, what was there to worry about?

(indistinct)

EM: Mother never did know what we did.

DG: We'd run across that same trail. I guess it was right on top of the ridge. And come out at the cemetery at Brush Creek Church. If we was going to do something special at the church, we'd take that trail, because it was a whole lot closer than walking around the road.

TE: So, you all knew the woods well.

DG: We knew every speck of them.

EM: We knew where the snakes were.

DG: Never saw a snake. Never saw anything.

TE: Is there anything else that we haven't asked about, a topic you'd like to share with us? Anything we missed, Judith?

JR: So, Emma, you raised your children here in Fairview?

EM: No.

JR: Did you move away to raise your children?

EM: Yes. I and Troy, he was in textiles. I had Kathy and Doug, just the two. And Kathy was born here. Well, so was Doug. But in 1956, Kathy was born at St. Joe. In 1967, Troy had taken a job in Orangeburg, South Carolina. And so, at two or three months old, then we moved from here to Orangeburg. That's what took us away from Asheville, was his job.

TE: When did you come back?

EM: When did I come back, Dot? When Kathy came down?

DG: I'm trying to think, Emma Lou. The year I really can't remember. Whenever you and Troy split up. You split up after you been married twenty-five years.

EM: Yeah.

DG: So, you came back up here.

EM: Yeah, I called him. I remember now. I called him in Danville. Kathy was babysitting his girlfriend, so he could take his girlfriend out. That was the time. I kicked him in the road.

DG: 'Cause they had moved several different times. They'd moved to Memphis and then to Danville and then, before you split, back to Rock Hill. You were in Rock Hill when you split up.

EM: Yeah, I was in Rock Hill.

DG: Then she came back here.

JR: Did you raise your children here?

DG: No. Mine were born and raised in Charlotte. My husband, he stayed with me.

EM: Dot...They had a real good marriage.

DG: (…) if he'd done anything wrong, I had a real good husband. Anyway, he wasn't a womanizer. Some guys, that's just the way they are.

JR: So, Emma, you had to be a single mom?

EM: Yeah.

JR: Pretty much had to take care of everything.

DG: She did a good job.

JR: It's hard. Hard work. All that childhood training came in.

EM: But Doug. It didn't bother him at all. He wasn't close to Troy. He was interested in other women. He wasn't interested in his son, his only son.

DG: At that time Kathy was in nurses training.

JR: Is she a nurse now?

EM: Yes, in Petersburg, Virginia.

TE: I talked to her on the phone in setting this up. I actually talked to your son once, too, on the phone. They both sound like very nice people.

EM: They are, because I raised them.

TE: I hear you. I hear you speaking, Mama.

DG: I'm going to tell you one thing. Is my head kind of big?

EM: Yeah. And it's getting bigger.

DG: Tomorrow, at 3:00 on Friday, my grandson is finally going to go on. He got his pilot license. He's finally been called for his first flight. I said what time are you going, honey?

EM: Do you get to see him?

DG: I told him I can't see you, of course, because he's flying out of Atlanta. But I bet you I can hear you.

JR: He's on a commercial airline?

DG: Yeah, with Delta. He's gotta fly the second seat until he gets 1,000 hours. He said I won't get but eight hours out of it, but I'll just have 900-something to go.

EM: That's sweet. He's determined.

DG: We're just so, so excited. And he also heard he'd been accepted into his doctorate program. His long-term vision is NASA – go with NASA. He's got all these plans, and so far, he's holding to them.

TE: Your head should be big.

EM: You'd never know. He's so funny. You'd never know he knew a thing.

DG: He's just 26 years old. He's accomplished. He's finished his masters. And he wasn't going to go to college. It was too hard.

TE: Ladies, it has been a pleasure and a joy to talk with you two ladies today.

DG: Thank you for coming by.

TE: Our pleasure.

DG: If anything looks bad, don't print it. Everybody knows enough about the Gaddys. I wish you could have talked to our brother, James. Our oldest brother. He's been dead for about five or six years. He was just hilarious. He could tell you more tales. Course some of them might not have been true.

EM: He was just like Andy Griffith.

JR: One of the questions we like to ask people is do you remember any outstanding characters when you were growing up. It sounds like your brother, you had hime right there in your family.

DG: We had great brothers and sisters. He got after me. He was always telling me he was going to put worms on me. I was scared to death and I'd climb on the roof of the house to get away from him.

EM: I've seen her run through the tobacco patch…

DG: You know, I'm still petrified of worms. Moreso than a snake. Now that don't make much sense.

JR: Tobacco worms are pretty fierce.

DG: You know caterpillars – EW! They...EW!

END OF INTERVIEW.